



Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Tourism Industry in Pakistan in the COVID Era

NTCB's Tourism Recovery Action Committee

Background

The outbreak of the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) has brought about unprecedented challenges on multiple fronts. Travel and tourism, being one of the largest industries in the world today is also exposed to unique challenges and in a fight for its survival. The sector is likely to suffer for a prolonged period due to severe ripple effects, impacting tourism on several levels across the value chain and may have longest estimated degree of impact in terms of duration. Pakistan's tourism industry, like other parts of the world, is also bearing the brunt of the crisis. However, with ease in lockdown, the situation will improve and business will re-open but the condition will for sure not remain the same. Therefore, all players of the Industry must take precautionary measures and follow guidelines to address the issue of health, hygiene and safety.

Several countries have demonstrated that COVID-19 transmission from one person to another can be slowed or stopped if effective measures are adopted as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). This document/Standard operating procedures (SOPs) is developed, keeping in view the international best practices, inspirations from the "WHO Operational Considerations for COVID-19 Management in The Accommodation Sector" (March 2020) and modified as per local dynamics, with an object to mitigate adverse health hazards and impact on all players such as hotels, tour operators, travel agents, transport companies and similar establishments. In addition, the document will help any authority involved in public health to respond to a public health event in hotels/ tourism accommodation establishments and related services.

A. SoP's for Hotels and Accommodation Facilities

i. Entrance

- Security employees must have been trained on COVID-19
- Temperature checks at entrance of hotel should be mandatory and if possible, disinfect walk through gate be placed at main entrance..
- Guests running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be politely requested to return or guided to the nearest hospital/medical facility.
- Arrangements to be made for indicating social distancing, e.g. by marking the ground with adhesive tape, and drawing lines in areas such as the reception desk or areas where crowds can be expected.
- Information brochures and notes be readily available to guests at the first touch point in order to familiarize themselves with the measures taken and practices adopted regarding health and hygiene in the hotel
- Keep sanitizers for guests to use at the main entrance of the hotel.
- Provide a mask if guest is not wearing one.
- Disinfect and clean guest luggage after informing the guests

ii. Reception

- Prepare a mechanism for maintaining record of guests and their health conditions.
- If the guest is arriving from restricted countries or regions, ensure that you have detailed information from the guest upfront before arrival or at time of making the reservation.
- For all pre-booked guests all check-in formalities should be completed online to reduce contact and time at the front desk.
- Give safety, hygiene and other instructions to the guests as per the new SOPs.
- Ensure markings on the floor at reception to maintain Social Distancing.
- Ensure staff members are wearing masks & gloves at all time.
- Keep sanitizers for guests to use at the entrance gate and reception counter.
- Keep paper, envelopes and all equipment sanitized.
- Keep swabs which Guests can use with sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards
- If dealing with cash money, ensure both employee and guest use hand sanitizer after each transaction.

iii. Elevators (where applicable)

- Ensure that safety instructions, including the number of guests allowed at one time, is placed inside the elevator and is easily visible; apologize for the delay and inconvenience caused to the guests due to the new safety norms.
- Ensure elevator floor buttons are regularly sanitized by the Housekeeping Associates.
- Keep floor & other area of the elevators that can be touched sanitized.
- Install hand sanitizer dispensers in the elevators.

iv. Guest Rooms

- Due to Social Distancing norms, allocate alternate rooms or leave one room vacant in between, based on occupancy levels. If possible occupancy level may be keep at 70%.
- Guests' instructions given at the reception should include instructions on how the rooms are sanitized at regular intervals.
- Place a tent card or post to say the room & other touch points have been sanitized.
- Ensure Housekeeping staff are wearing safety gear.
- Keep sanitizers at regular intervals in the corridors and small dispensers in the rooms.
- Laundry, room service instructions should be available in the room for the new SOPs being implemented.
- Room linen to be changed once in two days or ONLY on request; no turn down.
- Services to facilitate minimal contact.

v. Restaurants

- Reduce number of tables to maintain Social Distancing norms.
- Seating for the tables to be reduced to half of capacity.
- Arrival instructions should explain to guests that they should come down to the restaurants only when a table is available to avoid crowding.
- Staff must be trained for minimal contact/communication during service.

- Ensure staff are wearing protective equipment like masks, gloves and hair nets.
- Use disposable napkins which are pre-packed or individually packed serviettes.
- Keep sanitizers for guests and staff use on the reception counter.
- Keep swabs which guests can use with sanitizer to clean their cell phones or credit cards etc.
- The "Open Buffet arrangement" should have social distancing measures been taken to prevent hygiene and contamination

vi. Business Centers (where applicable)

- Keep enough space between work desks.
- Limit the number of guests in the area based on maximum allowed
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the guest has moved out.

vii. Meetings (where applicable)

- In case guests require a meeting area, keep enough space between tables & chairs.
- Limit the number of guests in the area based on maximum allowed.
- Disinfect each desk, equipment and work area after the guest has moved out.

viii. Pool and Gym etc. (where applicable)

- Keep these areas closed till advised to open, as per government norms.
- Suggest alternate options / drop to open parks or walks which may be safer.
- Include Yoga sessions or health channels on in-house TV network for guests to follow.

ix. Check-out

- Create a separate check-out area if you think it's getting over-crowded.
- Advise the guests to inform their check-out plans in advance so that bills can be made ready.
- Put floor markers as in case of check-in.
- Provide sanitizers and other swabs on the counter in case the guest requires.

x. Guest Transport

- Ensure the driver is wearing protective gear such as mask, gloves etc.
- The vehicle should be disinfected with every arrival.
- Keep sanitizers for use by driver and guests in the vehicle.
- Check if the driver section can be segregated with a temporary plastic or a transparent sheet.
- Driver should be instructed to limit conversations to minimal.
- Guest instructions to be placed at the back seat; the information booklet must cover all the steps being taken by the hotel for safety and sanitization along with the operational norms for restaurants, room service, housekeeping & laundry procedures.

xi. Employee Transport

- Temperature check point for staff before boarding the bus/van, where transport is provided

- Ensure that staff transport is organized in case public transport is not operating in your cities or is not safe.
- You may wish to have few staff members stay in the hotel, keeping in mind the Occupancy levels.

xii. Employee Dining

- Shifts must be staggered to avoid cafeteria crowding.
- Cafeteria hours should be extended to allow smaller groups over a longer period of time - the usage should be restricted to 33%- 50% of its capacity at any given time.

xiii. Logging In and Out

- Request all employees to stay at home in case they have any symptoms of flu or are not feeling well.
- Ensure temperature check for all employees upon entering into the premises of the hotel.
- Staff running temperature more than 98.6° F should be asked to return home.

xiv. Uniform

- Uniforms will need to be sanitized properly; steam press or heat iron can be used.
- Associates will be given masks and gloves as part of the uniform across all departments.
- Ensure that Associates are maintaining Social Distancing during uniform exchange.

xv. Kitchen

- Operational kitchens must be sanitized at regular intervals.
- Limit the number of staff to the minimum required; staff can be organized into teams to reduce interactions between teams.
- All staff should wear disposable masks, gloves, hair nets and all other safety gear.
- Workstations should be placed in such a way that the staff is not facing each other and can maintain appropriate Social Distance.
- Run limited menus and ramp-up in a phased manner.
- You may tweak the menus to include more options of cooked food rather than raw food.
- Ensure proper cleaning of vegetables, fruits, meats and all other materials that are required in the kitchens; use approved sanitizing agents to disinfect.
- All supplies need to be fully sanitized before entering the stores and refrigerators.
- Employees must report any situation in case there is suspicion of Covid-19 or signs of illness to the relevant manager.

xvi. Employees Healthcare and Training

- Ensure regular health check-ups for employees; can have a well-equipped clinic operational within the hotel premises with a health partner.
- Have proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Safety Team in case of any requirements, train the Safety Team to handle and wear disposable PPE equipment in case they have to evacuate a potential suspected case.
- Check all employee temperatures twice a day.

- HR Department should conduct sensitization classes for staff on upgraded hygiene standards; they can also have visiting faculty to update staff on standards
- All employees must be well-informed about all COVID related operating SOPs.

xvii. Waste Management

- Waste Management protocol to be prepared by the hotel management and these measures should be recorded and checked by the relevant manager.
- Hotel management should appoint an officer to follow the entire process on waste management.
- Trash can and other cleaning equipment shall be periodically disinfected.
- Necessary cleaning and disinfection processes required to be carried out in the garbage rooms periodically.

xviii. Other Guidelines

- If possible work of staff members be arranged in similar shifts.
- All indoor areas such as entrance lobbies, corridors and staircases, escalators, elevators, security guard booths, office rooms, meeting rooms, cafeteria should be mopped with a disinfectant with 1% sodium hypochlorite or phenolic disinfectants.
- Well mounted sanitizers/disinfectants shall be available for staff and visitors at prominent places such as reception, lobby, corridors, stairwalls, elevators etc.
- For metallic surfaces like door handles, security locks, keys etc. 70% alcohol can be used to wipe down surfaces where the use of bleach is not suitable.
- Masks, hand disinfection, general area disinfection and cleaning materials should have certificates.
- Measures to be clearly defined in case an event of emergency occurs.
- Once in public places, the guests be advised, to follow the guidelines set by the Government for each sector or business.

B. SoP's for Tour Operator Companies

i. Pre-Departure Information

- The tour operator will ensure that his group / guests / tourist(s) must have:
 - Screening at Entry Points
 - Sanitizers/Masks/Gloves be part of hand baggage
 - Undertaking by tourists to follow SOPs of Service Providers
 - Tourists shall be liable to quarantined as per the laid down protocols, (if deemed necessary).
- The tour leader/guide will carry a Performa containing:
 - Entries of Passport/CNIC No.
 - Recent Travel History of each guest
 - Phone/mobile numbers of Tour Company and guests' close relatives. (for any emergency contact)
 - Detailed day by day travel itinerary.

ii. Tour Operator Office

- Security employees, if deputed, must have been trained on COVID-19
- Temperature checks at entrance of office should be mandatory and if possible, disinfect walk through gate be placed at main entrance.
- Guests running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be politely requested to return or guided to the nearest hospital/medical facility.
- Arrangements to be made for indicating social distancing, e.g. by marking the ground with adhesive tape, and drawing lines in areas such as the reception desk or areas where crowds can be expected.
- Information brochures and notes be readily available to guests at the first touch point in order to familiarize themselves with the measures taken and practices adopted regarding health and hygiene in the officer or during the tour
- Keep sanitizers for guests to use at the main entrance and at the reception counter.
- Provide a mask if guest is not wearing one.
- Prepare a mechanism for maintaining record of guests and their health conditions.
- If the guest is arriving from restricted countries or regions, ensure that you have detailed information from the guest upfront before arrival or at time of making the reservation.
- Give safety, hygiene and other instructions to the guests as per the new SOPs.
- Ensure staff members are wearing masks & gloves at all time.
- Keep paper, envelopes and all equipment sanitized.
- Keep swabs which Guests can use with sanitizer to clean their phone or credit cards
- If dealing with cash money, ensure both employee and guest use hand sanitizer after each transaction.

iii. Guests Transport

- Ensure the driver is wearing protective gear such as mask, gloves etc.
- Vehicle shall be disinfected according to the set procedures prior to commencement of Journey and before boarding of passengers.
- Tour Operators shall ensure provision of Disinfection Certificate verified by the staff of the concerned authority/health department.
- Keep sanitizers for use by driver and guests in the vehicle.
- Check if the driver section can be segregated with a temporary plastic or a transparent sheet.
- Driver should be instructed to limit conversations to minimal.
- Guest instructions to be placed in the seat pockets; the information booklet must cover all the steps being taken by the tour operator/hotel for safety and sanitization along with the operational norms for restaurants, room service, housekeeping & laundry procedures.

iv. Safety Precautions During Travel

- Travelers shall be seated in a staggered way so that necessary social distance may be ensured and would be required to wear masks throughout the journey.

- Temperature checks at start of the trip should be mandatory for guests, tour guide and driver. Anybody running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should be politely asked to stay back and contact the nearest hospital/medical facility
- Any traveler having symptoms or feelings of COVID-19 including but limited to shortness of breath, coughing, high fever and sore throat during the trip must immediately inform the nearest health facility on the way.
- Traveler shall not be allowed to congregate during journey.
- List of useful items such as hand sanitizers, tissue paper, surgical masks, thermometers and vomit bags must be prepared for tourists.
- Patronize reputable and hygienic restaurants which adopts/practice precautionary measures and provide liquid soap/ hand washing facilities etc.
- In case of group travel arrange an appropriate coach for the size of group to avoid overcrowding inside the coach.
- Prepare a leaflet for tourists to adhere to food safety and hygiene as recommended by authorities' from time by time.

v. Employee Healthcare and Training

- Ensure regular health check-ups for employees and freelance tour guides.
- Temperature check of tour guide and driver at start of the trip should be mandatory. Any staff running a temperature of more than 98.6° F should not accompany the trip in any case and immediately contact the nearest hospital/medical facility.
- Provide proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the Safety Team in case of any requirements, train the Safety Team to handle and wear disposable PPE equipment in case they have to evacuate a potential suspected case.
- Conduct sensitization classes for staff on upgraded hygiene standards.
- All employees including tour guides and drivers must be well-informed about all COVID related operating SOPs.

vi. The Tour Operators must Ensure that:

- A written undertaking assuring adherence to SOPS/Instructions issued by Federal, Provincial or Regional Governments shall be provided by tour operating Company prior to commencement of journey.
- The Tour Operating Company will share complete details of group members including travel history, country details, medical history and all other relevant information. All travelling groups shall be scanned before entry To and Exit from any province / region.
- An inventory of essential personal protection equipment comprising protection suits, gloves, surgical masks, goggles shall be maintained and accordingly its availability will be ensured.
- Tour Company shall ensure provision of signed health declaration Form/Guardians in case of infants/Disables prior to commencement of journey.

vii. Use of Hotel/Accommodation Facilities During the Trip

- Tour companies shall only use approved hotels and accommodation facilities for providing boarding and lodging facility to their guests. (List of approved hotels and accommodation

facilities strictly following the SOPs will be provided by the provincial/regional tourism departments).

- During travel, the stop over stay or stay for meals will also be arranged at the pre-approved restaurants/hotels.
- Guest must be instructed about the safety and hygiene procedures during the stay at hotels.
- Disinfect and clean guest luggage before every departure.

viii. Tourist Areas

- For tourist visiting areas the local authorities should ensure that they comply to guidelines issued time to time by the govt.
- A leaflet of instructions indicating all the measures for their safety should be provided at specified points by the local authorities.
- Hotels and other accommodations facilities must be made responsible to provide information leaflet to tourists leaving hotels for visit etc.

C. SoP's for Airlines

Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (PCAA) has issued airlines related SOPs for domestic and international airlines which can be found at the below given links:

International Flights/Travelers

http://covid.gov.pk/travel_guidelines/SOPs%20for%20International%20Passenger%20Flights.pdf

Domestic Flights-Travelers

http://covid.gov.pk/travel_guidelines/SOPs%20for%20Domestic%20Private%20Flights.pdf

All service providers such as tour operators, travel agents and hotels etc may kindly follow these SOPs in letter and spirit. For further updates on COVID-19 follow the government of Pakistan website <http://covid.gov.pk/>

NTCB'S TOURISM RECOVERY ACTION COMMITTEE HAS PREPARED THESE SOPS IN THE LIGHT OF INTERNATIONAL BEST PRACTICES AND CONSULTATION WITH THE CONCERNED STAKEHOLDERS.